

Exchange With Reporters in Belle, West Virginia January 22, 2002

Upcoming Session of Congress/Terrorist Attack in India

Q. Mr. President, do you think the Enron investigation will become a distraction for Congress and, by extension, your goals?

The President. No.

Q. Is the attack in Calcutta an attack on America? Was the attack in Calcutta an attack on our country?

The President. Well, we're gathering more information about it, to find out exactly what the facts are. Terror is terror, however. It doesn't matter whether it's an attack on us or an attack on other people. You've got to work together to fight off terrorists.

For your question, I believe Congress knows what it needs to do. It needs to fund the war. It needs to fund homeland security. It needs to work on ways to create jobs. And I'm confident that all the facts will come out on Enron. And I'm also confident that if Congress has the right attitude, we can get a lot done. We need an energy policy, a trade policy. So I'm going to keep talking about it until we get it done.

Enron/Energy Policy

Q. Do you worry that Enron creates a negative perception about you or your policies?

The President. Our administration has done the exact right thing. There has been a couple of contacts with people in my Cabinet. And my Cabinet officers said, "No help here." And we're starting an investigation before anybody started paying attention to Enron. Last December, Elaine Chao started an investigation of pensions. And I'm absolutely confident the American people know that my administration has acted the right way.

What I'm outraged about is that shareholders and employees didn't know all the facts about Enron. My own mother-in-law bought stock last summer, and it's not worth anything now. If she had known all the facts, I don't know what her decision would have been made, but she didn't know all the facts. And a lot of shareholders didn't know all the facts. And that's wrong.

And so our Government must do something about it, must make sure that the accounting practices that have been going on for quite a while are addressed, make sure there's full disclosure and the corporate government's issues are wide open for everybody to understand.

If Congress is going to do its business, and should—the Congress also needs to stay focused on the American people. We're running a war. We've got to make sure our homeland is secure. And we've got to make sure people can find work. And we'll take care of our business.

Q. [*Inaudible*—call the information about meetings between the Vice President and Enron and energy policy, just to get it out—

The President. If somebody has got an accusation about some wrongdoing, just let me know. It's like when I talked with Don Evans and O'Neill, they told me they had spoke to Enron. I said, "Tell the people what you did." And if there's any accusations, if you've got anything on your mind—the energy report should speak for itself. We laid out the energy report; it's fully disclosed. People now know that we need an energy plan based upon conservation and increasing supplies and better transmission of energy. And there's no better place to talk about energy than right here in West Virginia, which is an energy-dependent State.

Q. The West Virginia coal miners, sir, what do you say to—

The President. My answer is that with a comprehensive energy plan, they're going to be able to find work. And we need an energy plan. And there are ways to have coal exploration and coal development with a sensitivity toward our environment.

West Virginia's Economic Development

Q. What about the West Virginian who's not into coal, the other part of the State that needs help so badly?

The President. Well, education is going to be the first step. People getting a good education are going to be able to find good work. And West Virginia has got an inter-

esting, burgeoning tourist industry. They've got a good natural gas industry, and they've got a lot going for them. But a lot of it is going to be the ability to educate the people so they can find work. And that's why this education bill is a good piece of legislation.

Thank you all, pleasure.

NOTE: The exchange began at 12:40 p.m. during a tour of the Walker Machinery Co. Powertrain and Engine Rebuild Facility. In his remarks, the President referred to his mother-in-law, Jenna Welch.

Remarks to Employees of the Cecil I. Walker Machinery Company in Belle
January 22, 2002

Thank you very much. Well, thank you for that warm welcome. Steve, I appreciate the fact that everybody who works here has got a uniform on with my middle name. [Laughter] I don't know if he'll claim me as a relative, being a Walker. [Laughter] But hearing how you like to sing at parties in West Virginia, I'm not so sure I want to claim you. [Laughter]

But I'm honored you all would have me. I appreciate small-business owners, entrepreneurs, people who work hard, people who build a team. I want to thank the workers here for such a warm greeting. I also appreciate you for your high-quality work. You know, American workers are the best in the world, and Walker employees are some of the best workers in the world, too.

I can't think of a better place to talk about economic security than at a place that works hard to create jobs and helps people keep a job and makes sure that people who work here are treated well, treated with respect.

At its core, an economic security plan for every American has got to be the goal

of our Government, and it begins with a good education and ends with secure retirement. And in between, much of one's life depends on being able to find work, good, steady work. And that's how I approach decisions about our economy. I ask, are we creating an environment in which people can find work? My economic plan is summed up in one word: jobs. And that's what all of us in Washington ought to be asking: How do we create jobs for people who want to work in America?

I want to thank members of the West Virginia delegation who are with me. Shelley traveled with me from Washington. We flew down together; we had a good visit. Every time I talk to her, she constantly talks about West Virginia. Every time I talk to her, she doesn't necessarily do everything I tell her to. She's got kind of a West Virginia independent streak to her. [Laughter] But I'm proud to call her friend, and I'm also proud to call Jay Rockefeller friend. He and I are different political parties, but that's okay. We both love America.